

PITTSBURGH CPAC NEWSLETTER

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Federal Job Search Easier Than Ever

Swan Wilkerson



The Office of Personnel Management recently introduced a feature that will make it easier for federal job seekers to customize their search for a federal job via e-mail.

OPM introduced the new feature, USAJOBS by Email, to its employment web site USAJOBS. This new feature gives people a new tool to help find the career they want. USAJOBS by Email allows users to focus their job search on up to three different job categories, and sends them current job openings by e-mail. In addition, each time a new job is posted that meets their specific search criteria, it sends an email notification with a link directly to the vacancy announcement.

The Office of Personnel Management has set up a federal Career Intern Program web site that includes program features as well as a question and answers section designed to help agencies recruit and attract employees into a variety of occupations. The web site, www.opm.gov/careerintern/index.htm, includes a link to question and answer page that describes the career intern program, its history and how it differs from the Presidential Management Internship, among other information.

Although OPM has set up the web page, individuals interested in career intern opportunities must contract specific agencies directly since OPM will not be the central source for career intern possibilities.

Job seekers also are advised to access OPM's web site at www.opm.gov for general information and program updates.

CHANGES IN TSP

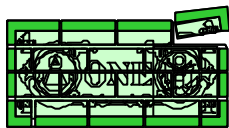
Joyce Voynick



Included in the budget passed by Congress was a law that raises the contribution limit in TSP. The limit will rise to 11% for FERS employees and 6% for CSRS employees. Employees may raise their TSP contributions effective with the TSP open season that begins 15 May 2001. The limit will rise to 12% for FERS employees and 7% for CSRS employees with the TSP open season starting 15 November 2001. The TSP investment limit will rise 1 percentage point at the beginning of each fiscal year until 2005 when it will reach 15% for FERS and 10% for CSRS employees. Beginning in 2006 the limits will be abolished and Federal employees will be

able to contribute any amount they wish to the TSP as long as they stay below the annual maximum established by the IRS.

Instructions on how to select the new percentages have not yet been released by the Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board; however, the instructions will probably be the same as any other open season change (Army Benefits Center). More details on this topic will be provided when they are received.



Stopping Health Benefits Coverage

Joyce Voynick

With the advent of having the premiums for health benefits deducted prior to being taxed, another change has occurred. Employees who have their health benefit premiums deducted prior to having their salary taxed may NOT cancel their health benefits coverage unless it is during health benefits open season. However, if there is a life changing event that occurs outside of open season that change may be made, i.e., death of a spouse so the employee can change from family to self only coverage. A waiver that would stop the pre-tax deduction, and have the deduction occur after tax may only be signed during open season, unless the employee is a new hire.

Executive Order asserts the power of OPM, MSPB

By Katy Saldarini, Government Executive Magazine

Even federal agencies that don't have to follow standard civil service rules must still answer to merit system oversight agencies, according to an Executive Order issued in the *Federal Register* Thursday.

Title 5 of the U.S. Code dictates standard personnel rules for the federal government. The by law to ensure that resources management system principles of does so by reviewing legally required to



Office of Personnel Management is required federal agencies operate their human programs in accordance with the merit fairness, efficiency and objectivity. OPM workforce information that agencies are provide.

Certain federal agencies are exempt from the personnel rules of Title 5. For example, performance-based organizations, such as the Education Department's Student Financial Aid office, are exempt from the strict personnel rules of Title 5. Parts of the IRS and parts of the Veterans Affairs Department, as well as the entire Federal Aviation Administration, are also not governed by Title 5.

As a result, there has been debate in the federal human resources community as to whether these agencies are required to report workforce information to OPM and are subject to oversight by OPM and the Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB), the federal government's guardian of merit-based employment.

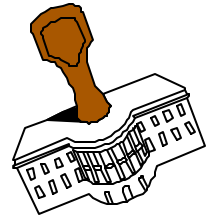
Executive Order 13197 ends the debate by clarifying that all federal agencies in the executive branch, including those exempt from Title 5, must comply with merit system principles and must submit workforce information to OPM for oversight purposes. There is one exception: agencies that deal with national security, such as the CIA, FBI, Defense Intelligence Agency and National Imagery and Mapping Agency, are exempt from the order.

"The President and the public need to be assured that federal agencies are monitoring the exercise of all human resources management authorities that have been delegated to them," the order said.

OPM's merit systems oversight office uses workforce data to identify opportunities for improving personnel programs and to help agencies with effective recruitment and employee development.

John Palguta, director of MSPB's office of policy and evaluation, said the executive order has been in the works since last spring. Work on the executive order, dated Jan. 18, was completed in time for it to be issued during the last days of the Clinton administration. But Palguta said he doubts that the Bush administration will override the order. "It simply sets the record straight," Palguta said. "It's one of those good government provisions that makes sure Congress and the President will have access to information."

Merit System Principles



The merit system principles are the public's expectations of a system that is efficient, effective, fair, open to all, free from political interference, and staffed by honest, competent, and dedicated employees. As the federal government experiences continued change in the management of human resources (centralization, deregulation, delegation, etc.), it becomes increasingly important that line supervisors and managers incorporate the merit system principles into every decision process they use.

The merit system principles are:

1. Recruit from appropriate sources representing all segments of society.
2. Select and advance only (a) qualified individuals, (b) solely on their relative ability, and (c) after fair and open competition that assures equal opportunity.
3. Treat employees and applicants fairly.
4. Manage employees efficiently and effectively.
5. Educate and train employees when it will result in better organizational or individual performance.
6. Correct inadequate employee performance.

7. Separate those employees who cannot or will not meet performance expectations.
8. Protect employees against arbitrary action, favoritism, and reprisal.
9. Prohibit employees from using their official authority or influence to interfere with, or affect the result of an election.
10. Compensate employees on the basis of equal pay for work of equal value.
11. Provide appropriate incentives and recognition for excellence in performance.
12. Maintain high standards of integrity, conduct, and concern for the public interest.

TALX

Joyce Voynick

TALX is a proposed automated system that will enable employees to furnish a "key" to companies that need to verify employment. You will be able to have three active "keys" at one time; if they are unused they will expire in six months. This "key" enables institutions to accessing the system either via the web or phone.

The system is secure, a PIN number, among other information is needed to request a "key". Employees will obtain the "keys" by phone or a web site, enter a code that will designate you as a Department of Defense employee, your social security number, and a four digit code, initially your month and day of birth. After access the system the first time you may change your four-digit code to another PIN number.



The system will give you a six-digit code that you give the organization requesting employment verification.

There will be three levels of access, basic, basic plus and full. Basic verifies that you are an Army employee, spells your name, your most recent start date, and how long you have been employed. It will also spell your job title if needed. Basic plus gives the above information, but also provides current salary information. Full access provides everything listed above; in addition, it will give your salary history for the prior two years if available.

More information will be provided prior to implementation of this system.

New Employee in the CPAC



Welcome to the newest member of the CPAC team, Debra Misajon. Debbie started as the Personnel Assistant in the CPAC on January 29, 2000. However, she is not new to the Corps, previously she worked for the Honolulu District for 10 years. Debbie is the proud grandmother of Serena – 8yrs old and T.J. 6 yrs old.

